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MALAWI

SUCCESS STORY

Combating HIV/AIDS through Nutrition

Food rations support strategy to overcome both disease and hunger



Photo: USAID/Michael Bardegett

Macreen Banda, from the central Malawi village of Mitundu, collects his monthly grain ration from a program for vulnerable populations.

“Without this food, I would have been forced to buy less healthy foods in the market and my small children may not have eaten,” said Betina Zarimba, a mother who receives food from a USAID-funded program.

Telling Our Story
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Under the shade of eucalyptus trees, a group of Malawian farmers gathers just outside the small village of Mitundu, their eyes fixed upon three men gesturing and speaking loudly in their native Chichewa. These men are delivering life-saving advice to a group of the most vulnerable citizens of Malawi.

The men represent the USAID-funded I-LIFE Consortium, a group of seven international non-governmental organizations. The men and women sitting attentively under the eucalyptus trees are all affected by HIV/AIDS.

Malawi has one of the highest HIV/AIDS rates in the world. In addition, 25% of the mostly rural population lacks adequate food supplies. I-LIFE combats both HIV/AIDS and malnutrition through creative programming and food distribution. In order to improve the food security of Malawi, I-LIFE is working to feed vulnerable populations, help farmers increase production and diversify income, and provide valuable health services along with public health education campaigns.

Today, the villagers are picking up their monthly ration of cornmeal and beans, but first they are invited to take part in an entertaining and informative program known as Hope Kit. Through dramatic acting and light-hearted humor, the Hope Kit team teaches about proper hygiene, adequate nutrition, and simple ways to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission. The audience, comprised of 50 men and 70 women, sit enraptured by the entertainment and the large, boisterous crowd soon draws in several passers-by.

The audience then forms lines behind rows of cornmeal bags, their monthly ration of grain. The fifty-five pounds of grain and five pounds of beans help this vulnerable population and their families meet their daily caloric needs.

Betina Zarimba, an HIV-positive mother of eight, said, “Without this food, I would have been forced to buy less healthy foods in the market and my small children may not have eaten.” She credits I-LIFE with helping meet her family’s food needs each month.